

For the first time in my administration, the Sixth Circuit will now have a full court to address important issues facing the residents of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. Unfortunately, too many other Federal judgeships across America remain vacant. This is unacceptable and inexcusable. Since the beginning of the 110th Congress, the Senate has confirmed only 10 circuit court nominees. In the last 2 years of the past three administrations, the Senate has confirmed an average of 17 circuit court judges. I strongly urge the Senate to hold hearings and votes on the 28 pending circuit and district court nominations to ensure that our Nation has a fully functioning judicial system.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

June 25, 2008

President George W. Bush welcomed Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to the United States of America and to the White House yesterday for the fourth bilateral meeting between leaders of our two countries in as many years. The President and the Prime Minister discussed the progress made since they last met in Vietnam in 2006 and committed to specific efforts to carry this increasingly robust bilateral relationship forward. The two leaders agreed the relationship is based on a positive, growing friendship, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to pursuing constructive and multifaceted cooperation on a wide range of issues that will contribute to the development of the depth of the relationship, which is in the long-term interests of both countries. They also shared their vision and goals for a stable, secure, democratic, and peaceful Asia-Pacific region and discussed future U.S.-Vietnam contributions to that end.

The leaders welcomed the deepening economic ties, noting that two-way bilateral trade topped \$12 billion in 2007 and that the United States is Vietnam's top export market. Prime Minister Dung affirmed Vietnam's resolve to maintain macroeconomic stability and determination to implement its commit-

ments under the World Trade Organization, the Bilateral Trade Agreement, and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement; improve its legal system; and create conditions favorable for foreign investors and trade growth.

The two leaders agreed that trade and economic ties are significant to the bilateral relationship. They announced that the United States and Vietnam would initiate negotiations toward a Bilateral Investment Treaty, signaling our commitment to open investment regimes and fair, non-discriminatory, and transparent treatment of foreign investment. President Bush affirmed that the United States is seriously reviewing Vietnam's request to be designated as a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences program, and he acknowledged Vietnam's request to be accorded Market Economy Status. They noted the importance of efforts within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to promote free and open trade and investment, including the prospect of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. President Bush reiterated the United States' general opposition to restrictions on food exports at a time of rising prices. The two leaders called on all countries to join in the effort to solve the world food problem. President Bush reaffirmed the United States' commitment to pursuing actions to maintain or expand existing assistance levels and to address the underlying conditions contributing to high food prices.

The two leaders discussed expanding and strengthening our senior-level dialogues. They endorsed the creation of new political-military and policy planning talks, which will allow for more frequent and in-depth discussions on security and strategic issues. The two leaders noted the benefit of an open and candid dialogue on issues relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. President Bush and Prime Minister Dung agreed on the importance of the rule of law in modern societies, and President Bush underscored the importance of promoting improved human rights practices and conditions for religious believers and ethnic minorities. Prime Minister Dung informed President Bush of the policies and efforts made by Vietnam in this area, and President Bush took note of

Vietnam's efforts to date and encouraged further progress. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to promoting and securing fundamental human rights and liberties.

The two leaders were pleased with the successes of Vietnamese Americans and noted their contribution to the promotion of the relationship between the two countries. President Bush welcomed these contributions and reiterated the U.S. government's support for Vietnam's national sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity.

President Bush expressed appreciation for Vietnam's cooperation in our joint humanitarian effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting for Americans who remain missing in action and Vietnam's willingness to carry out additional measures, noting that the Joint Field Activities have allowed for the identification and repatriation of the remains of 629 U.S. soldiers and reaffirmed the U.S. government's continued assistance in obtaining information for Vietnam's own accounting efforts. Prime Minister Dung highlighted the United States' assistance in this area as well. Prime Minister Dung applauded bilateral progress in addressing environmental contamination near former dioxin storage sites in Vietnam, particularly the ongoing implementation of \$3 million in U.S. funding for environmental remediation and health projects.

President Bush congratulated Prime Minister Dung on his country's two-year membership on the United Nations Security Council. The two leaders reaffirmed that the two countries will continue consultations on the pressing issues that will face the Security Council. The Prime Minister informed the President that Vietnam is completing the preparatory process for its effective participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Prime Minister Dung thanked President Bush for the invitation for Vietnam to participate in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), through which Vietnam will participate in training courses and other activities on peacekeeping operations. President Bush noted the ongoing visit of the humanitarian ship the USNS *Mercy* to Vietnam.

The two leaders expressed their wish to enhancing further U.S. relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and President Bush expressed his appreciation for Vietnam's active role in ASEAN. The two leaders discussed the areas of cooperation with ASEAN, including humanitarian assistance and Cyclone Nargis. President Bush reiterated that the United States is willing to work with ASEAN, the United Nations, and other non-governmental organizations to bring additional, much-needed humanitarian assistance to those affected by the devastating cyclone, and they discussed the need for entry and prompt access to all international aid workers to the disaster area.

The two leaders underscored the importance of cooperation on education and agreed to launch a high-level bilateral Education Task Force that will chart a roadmap and identify effective modalities for enhanced U.S.-Vietnam education cooperation. The two leaders also welcomed the continued success of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam and the growing number of Vietnamese students who choose to study in the United States. President Bush underscored the importance of a future Peace Corps program in Vietnam. Prime Minister Dung agreed in principle to the President's proposal on such a program and that the two sides will continue discussion to finalize related arrangements.

Prime Minister Dung thanked President Bush for assistance under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), noting that many people in Vietnam, including vulnerable children, are now receiving care, support, anti-retroviral treatment.

The President expressed his commitment to continue the development of intercountry adoption cooperation between the United States and Vietnam that ensures the best interests of the child, respects his or her fundamental rights, and prevents the abduction and trafficking of children. The Prime Minister underscored that Vietnam shares these goals and stressed that Vietnam will speed up preparations for an early accession to the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions. The Prime Minister also welcomed

U.S. technical assistance in facilitating this step.

Prime Minister Dung thanked President Bush for the United States' assistance on Vietnam's Atomic Energy Law as well as for technical information and training on nuclear safety.

Finally, the two leaders discussed cooperation on climate issues. Prime Minister Dung and President Bush welcomed the commencement of the Delta Research and Global Observation Network (DRAGON) project in Vietnam, which will establish an institute at Can Tho University to cooperate on training and research to produce healthy ecosystems and sustainable deltas. The two leaders also agreed to work together to promote Vietnamese climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, including the formation of a new subcommittee under the bilateral Science and Technology Agreement to discuss and coordinate joint initiatives.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks on the Situation in North Korea and an Exchange With Reporters

June 26, 2008

The President. Good morning. The policy of the United States is a Korean Peninsula free of all nuclear weapons. This morning we moved a step closer to that goal when North Korean officials submitted a declaration of their nuclear programs to the Chinese Government as part of the six-party talks.

The United States has no illusions about the regime in Pyongyang. We remain deeply concerned about North Korea's human rights abuses, uranium enrichment activities, nuclear testing and proliferation, ballistic missile programs, and the threat it continues to pose to South Korea and its neighbors.

Yet we welcome today's development as one step in the multistep process laid out by the six-party talks between North Korea, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.

Last year, North Korea pledged to disable its nuclear facilities. North Korea has begun disabling its Yongbyon nuclear facility, which

was being used to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. This work is being overseen by officials from the United States and the IAEA. And to demonstrate its commitment, North Korea has said it will destroy the cooling tower of the Yongbyon reactor in front of international television cameras tomorrow.

Last year, North Korea also pledged to declare its nuclear activity. With today's declaration, North Korea has begun describing its plutonium-related activities. It's also provided other documents related to its nuclear programs going back to 1986. It has promised access to the reactor core and waste facilities at Yongbyon, as well as personnel related to its nuclear program. All this information will be essential to verifying that North Korea is ending its nuclear programs and activities.

The six-party talks are based on a principle of action for action. So in keeping with the existing six-party agreements, the United States is responding to North Korea's actions with two actions of our own.

First, I'm issuing a proclamation that lifts the provisions of the Trading With the Enemy Act with respect to North Korea.

And secondly, I am notifying Congress of my intent to rescind North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terror in 45 days.

The next 45 days will be an important period for North Korea to show its seriousness of its cooperation. We will work through the six-party talks to develop a comprehensive and rigorous verification protocol. And during this period, the United States will carefully observe North Korea's actions and act accordingly.

The two actions America is taking will have little impact on North Korea's financial and diplomatic isolation. North Korea will remain one of the most heavily sanctioned nations in the world. The sanctions that North Korea faces for its human rights violations, its nuclear test in 2006, and its weapons proliferation will all stay in effect. And all United Nations Security Council sanctions will stay in effect as well.

The six-party process has shed light on a number of issues of serious concern to the United States and the international community. To end its isolation, North Korea must address these concerns. It must dismantle all of its nuclear facilities, give up its separated